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Guardian East

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Task Force Paxton:
Looking Back
page 12

Message to the troops



**Brig. Gen.
Jerry G. Beck Jr.**

**By Brig. Gen. Jerry G. Beck Jr.,
Commander MNB(E)**

Well done to all of you! The past year has been quite an eventful one for us all. You were called when your country needed you most. You accepted the mission and performed it magnificently. You should be very proud of what you have accomplished not only for the United States of America but for your state, your component, you personally and of course, the people of Kosovo.

As years go by you will reflect back upon the accomplishments and contributions you made in this part of the Balkans. Each and every one of you has played a

part in the completion of this mission from the PV2, who just returned from Basic Training and was mobilized, to the Soldiers who have served their nation for 25 years or more. You all have made a difference in Kosovo.

The people of Kosovo will also remember a lot of you for your contributions to them. The many visits to school children, community events, distribution of food and clothing, arbitration in times of need all were part of making a better life for people you probably had never thought about before this deployment. Regardless of their ethnicity, you were there to help in any way you could.

As you return to your employers, families and friends do not forget the sacrifices that they also have made. Be thankful for the support they provided to you while you were away. Without them, this mission would have been much more difficult. Ensure you thank them for all they have sacrificed while you were away.

Lastly, let me personally thank all of you for your service. You have all worked tirelessly for the good of the mission. You came together as a great team while we trained and you performed magnificently in the mission. It has been an honor and a privilege for me to have been the Task Force Commander of KFOR 5A. Thank you very much for your dedication, commitment and service to our nation. I wish you all God-speed.

ROLL ON!

SEE THE PHOTO OF THE DAY

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Submissions or story ideas related to the MNB(E) mission are encouraged. Send regular mail to MNB(E) PAO, Attn: Editor, Camp Bondsteel, APO AE 09340; send e-mail to guardianeast@bondsteel2.areur.army.mil.

COVER: *Spc. Jeff Szpala, an infantryman with Charlie Company, 2-112th, observes people passing by the Vitina/Viti Church. Photo by Spc. Tim Grooms.*

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COMMANDING GENERAL, MNB(E)
Brig. Gen. Jerry G. Beck Jr.

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AND COMMANDER, 29TH MPAD
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Sgt. Jon Soucy
Spc. Tim Grooms

LAYOUT EDITOR
Spc. Rob Barker

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A Polish tradition

Soldiers of the Polish-Ukrainian Battalion deliver presents to school children near Camp White Eagle.

Peacekeeping

Charlie Company, 1-110th Infantry, searches for weapons in an effort to provide a safe and secure environment.

91W Transition

The Army's combat medic and licensed practical nurse jobs are combining into one MOS, 91W.

Cover Story

Task Force Paxton looks back on a successful mission in Kosovo and prepares to go home.

Team Sapper

Sapper Soldiers work with local residents to find weapons in the area.

Fire Graduation

The Task Force Falcon Fire Department trains and graduates its fifth class of recruits.

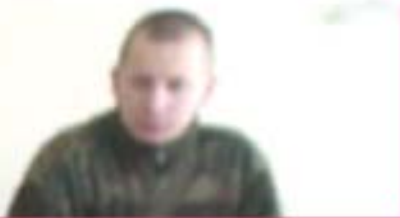
Pfc. Laurie McKinnon, a combat medic with the 256th Combat Support Hospital, prepares her workstation before giving an intravenous injection to her practice partner during the 91W transition course here. Photo by Spc. Rob Barker. See page 10 for the story.

Sharing a



The POLUKRBAT brought toys and gifts to children of the

tradition



Story and photos by Spc. Sean McCollum

Santa arrived a little late to the town of Koxhaj when he arrived on Jan. 17, but he came decked out in his big red suit, beard, and bearing gifts, which was the most important part for the children of the Ali Asllani Primary school.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the troops of the Polish-Ukrainian Battalion were visiting that same day, and they came bearing gifts of their own in the form of pencils, paper, and a sound system. The occasion, said Polish Army Capt. Boguslaw Pelc, deputy chief of civil affairs for the battalion, was a post-Christmas celebration traditionally held in Polish schools the same day, and the soldiers wanted to share it with the local school's children.

The target school was picked because of its close ties to Camp White Eagle, having much to do with being less than 300 meters away from the POLUKRBAT soldiers. According to Pelc, the day's giveaway was just the latest in a string of humanitarian gestures toward the school including assistance to build it.

Knowing the children so well gave a special emphasis to the first event of the day: the "draw your dreams" challenge. After the soldiers gave the children the pencils, paper, and advice, the children produced drawings of what they want out of life. Pelc said the finished pictures would be hung in the battalion dining facility for a week so all the troops could see.

After drawing their dreams, the students were treated to a showing of the Disney movie "Anastasia" with a television and speaker system provided by the battalion.

Then Santa arrived from around the corner, the face behind the beard looking suspiciously like Polish interpreter Femi Meleci. He entered the room to the cheers of the 60 students in attendance and more than a few outside. One at a time the students told him if they had been naughty or nice, and sometimes Santa asked a student to sing a song, and everyone sang along.

Thirty students were selected by their teachers to attend the party, but more than double that amount attended, and demand outran supply for the event, leaving the soldiers to find a way to fairly distribute the 30 gift bags stuffed with teddy bears, stationery, and candy.

"It's impossible to invite all children," said Pelc. "We tried to find some solution." The problem was solved as equally as possible, with one child from each family receiving a bag and everyone being invited to watch the movie.

After the bags were gone and Santa had gone back to his North Pole hideaway, it was time for classes to adjourn for the day. Most of the kids went home happy, but the soldiers' job continued. They are here to help provide a safe and secure environment, and that day it meant escorting the children home to ensure older children didn't try to take Santa's gifts.



Santa Claus, looking a lot like Polish interpreter Femi Meleci of the Polish-Ukrainian Battalion, asks a student of the Ali Asllani Primary School if she has been naughty or nice.

Ali Asllani Primary School and shared their holiday traditions



Infantrymen keeping peace



Story and photos by Sgt. Jon Soucy

In a continuing effort to provide a safe and secure environment in Kosovo, Soldiers from Charlie Company, 1-110th Infantry recently took part in a company-wide search of areas in and around Koprivnica/ Kopernice.

The unit, with support from AH-64 Apache helicopters acting as aerial observers, went door-to-door conducting permissive searches of homes, outbuildings and abandoned buildings in and around the town.

"We wanted to show an overwhelming presence within the town," said Capt. Troy Amundson, commander of the company, "and to show that KFOR is still willing to go to great lengths to obtain weapons in the area."

According to Amundson, plans to do a large-scale search of the area came as a result of reports of a wide range of weapons being fired in the area over the past two

(See *PEACE* page 9)



Photos above feature infantrymen with Charlie Company, 1-110th Infantry, searching storage areas near Koprivnica/ Kopernice for illegal weapons and ammunition. The Soldiers were conducting a large-scale search following recent reports of gunfire.



Spc. Ian Carrier, an infantryman with Charlie Company, 1-110th Infantry, searches the outside of an abandoned house near Koprivnica/ Kopernice for illegal weapons and ammunition.



Spc. James Haught, an infantryman with Charlie Company, 1-110th Infantry, walks hand in hand with a young Kosovar boy while on patrol in an area near Koprivnica/ Kopernice.



The owner of a home in an area near Koprivnica/ Kopernice watches as Soldiers from Charlie Company, 1-110th Infantry search a well in front of his home for illegal weapons and ammunition.

(PEACE from page 6)

months.

This was not the first large scale, company-sized weapons search the unit has undertaken. A week prior to the search in the Koprivnica/ Kopernice area, the unit conducted a similar search in the Ogoste/ Ogoshte area that recovered several weapons including two pistols, two SKS rifles and an AK-47 assault rifle, Amundson said.

During the operation in the Ogoste/ Ogoshte area many people who had illegal weapons and ammunition fled to hide them in the surrounding hillsides, but the Soldiers planned for that possibility and were able to pursue them.

Though the first operation ran smoothly, improvements were made for the search in Koprivnica/ Kopernice.

"I think we planned a little better," said Amundson.

And Soldiers in the company agreed.

"This is a lot better then the previous search," said Spc. James Haught, an infantryman in the unit. "I'm not running up and down mountains."

For the Soldiers, this method of searching for weapons is a favorable one.

"I like it," said Spc. Nathan Burt, an

infantryman in the unit. "I think it's one of the better ideas that we've had as far as searching and finding weapons. It's more effective than just asking questions because no one is going to say, 'Yes, I have a weapon, here it is,' unless it's a hunting rifle."

The weapons found are turned over to the Kosovo Police Service and destroyed. Anyone who is detained with an illegal weapon is also turned over to the KPS for prosecution.

Though the search in Koperivnica/ Kopernice didn't result in the recovery of any illegal weapons, the infantrymen said it was a success.

"I still consider what we did a complete success," said Amundson. "In both towns we've had a number of people approach us and residents have said that weapons are still there. It did lead us to some intelligence where we may be able to do some future operations."

As the Soldiers headed back to Camp Monteith they talked about how the operation unfolded. And with the information gathered from this mission, the Soldiers would be able to utilize it to plan for other missions where they continue with their overall assignment in Kosovo – providing a safe and secure region for all residents.



Spc. James Treacy, a combat medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-111th Infantry, gives an intravenous injection during part of the recent 91W transition course here.

Sticking with it

Two MOSs are merging, and Soldiers are optimistic about the results

Story and photos by Spc. Rob Barker

The Army has gone through many changes over the years. The M16A1 rifle became the M16A2, all Soldiers were given berets and new physical fitness uniforms, and the Army continues to change by developing equipment like the new lightweight body armor and kevlar ballistic helmet. The Army does not only change equipment, however. By merging two Military Occupational Specialties, the Army is planning for its future.

"The Army is built on change," said Sgt. 1st Class Tony Crowl, a medical supply noncommissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-112th Infantry. "Continuous improvements in medical procedures require changes in MOSs."

The Army's combat medic and licensed practical nurse positions, designated 91B and 91C, are being combined to produce Soldiers who perform their jobs in a wider variety of medical atmospheres and situations, under a new combat medic position titled 91W.

Each Soldier in one of the two MOSs is required to complete a 91W Transition Course, in which they are taught or refreshed on a variety of topics. Some of the 35-day training that consists of three phases touches on a wide range of topics including trauma assessment and management, immobilization of bone and joint injuries, and evacuation, and basic and advanced airway skills, to name a few.

"It is a very fast paced course," said Sgt. Gary Stitzer, a 91W transition coordinator with Bravo Company, 2-112th Infantry. "They call it a transition course because somebody coming fresh off of the streets would not be able to complete a course like

this at this pace. The Soldiers of the transition classes already have some knowledge before this course."

Prior medical knowledge and satisfactory completion of the course will allow the combat medics to perform their many duties while being flexible and resourceful.

"It's going to make the combat medic a lot more versatile," said Stitzer. "They're going to be able to work in the ambulance or in the clinic. It's going to give them a variety of situational experiences to use."

The new versatility will help more than just hospital and ambulance units. Non-medical units that have combat medics assigned to them will also benefit from the 91W transition, as will Soldiers in those units who have the secondary job of combat medic, like Sgt. Darren Logsdon, who is primarily a civil affairs sergeant with the 448th Civil Affairs Battalion.

"In civil affairs, we are out there on the front line. We are not out there waiting for people to come to us," said Logsdon. "If something was to happen, by me taking this class and keeping my secondary MOS, I can go and help the person. I'm not working in a hospital or an aid station waiting for patients, but I can give them the help they need."

No one knows when disaster may strike, but Logsdon is confident that the training refreshed his knowledge on the mission and better prepared him if an emergency were to happen.

"Going through training like this gives you a better grasp of what your job actually is and how to go about doing it," said Logsdon. "When you are out there in the real world, you tend to forget a few things and taking a class like this brings it back to your head and refreshes your mind."



Sgt. Darren Logsdon, a civil affairs sergeant with the 448th CA Battalion, takes the pulse of a patient during a recent mass casualty exercise. The exercise was just one day of the 35 day 91W transition course, in which the combat medic and licensed practical nurse MOSs are being merged.

T PAXTON F

Story and photos by
Spc. Tim Grooms

Staff Sgt. Ron Waite, a squad leader with Charlie Company, 2-112th Infantry, looks over the observe and detain list while performing guard duties at the Vitina Church in Vitina/ Viti.





Staff Sgt. Ron Waite, a squad leader with Charlie Company, 2-112th, Infantry stops a man that was driving to fast by children near the Vitina Church in Vitina/ Viti.

"Our guys did a great job and I'm real proud of them."

**-Maj. Samuel Hayes,
executive officer
Task Force Paxton-**

According to the "Oxford Desk Dictionary", success is defined as an accomplishment of an aim with a favorable outcome. This could be climbing a mountain, or finishing a term paper for school, but in the case of Task Force Paxton, success was helping the people of Kosovo while keeping them from harm. From finding illegal weapons to being a player in a local terror suspect turning himself in, the group has had a hand in improving the province.

Centered around an area of Kosovo known as the "Iron Triangle", infantrymen of the task force patrolled the area which is one of the most ethnically mixed of Multi-national Brigade (East), and even though the people of the area are diverse, hostilities have been almost non-existent.

"There are mainly economic and psychological problems," said Capt. Jeff Shultz, company commander of Charlie Company, 2-112th. "There were no real tensions between the two ethnicities in terms of actual hostilities. We haven't seen true hostilities in quite some time."

While working in the "Iron Triangle", one of Charlie Company's jobs was to guard a Serbian Church located in the center of Viti/ Vitina. The town has a small ethnic-Serbian population, which makes up about eight percent of the city, said Shultz. And while doing this, some Soldiers have learned a valuable lesson.

"What we learn from here is learning to talk to each side and to listen to both sides of the story to help solve the problem," said Staff Sgt. Ron Waite, a squad leader with the company.

Guarding the church also gave the children the opportunity to interact with Soldiers, and the time spent together gave the children role-models.

"The kids are all good to us," said Spc. Jeff Szpala, an infantryman with Charlie Company. "[We are] like their idols."

The other two companies, Alpha who

patrolled the southern section of the Viti/Vitina municipality, and Bravo who patrolled the northern sector, were also busy during their tour.

One of the most significant events happened in late January. According to Maj. Samuel Hayes, executive officer of Task Force Paxton, Bravo Company conducted a cordon and search and because of pressure from their presence, one of the region's top suspected terrorists eventually turned himself over to authorities.

In the Alpha Company sector, Hayes said one of the most challenging parts of the mission, which affected all of Kosovo, was the establishment of a border crossing to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. "The dynamics of that issue was much more far reaching than our municipality. It affected all of Kosovo. What it did internationally as well as in Kosovo, was validate a border," said Hayes.

Other than patrols and searches, the Soldiers were also active in informing local residents about military activities in the area including medical civilian assistant programs. They also gave out important information about how unexploded ordinance is dangerous and encouraged them to rely on the Kosovo Police Service, Hayes said.

"What it does is demonstrate KFOR's commitment to them," he said.

From assisting in MEDCAPs to performing patrols, as Task Force Paxton's time here comes to a close, it can be viewed as a success.

"I would say we were successful. There is more to it than just harvesting weapons," said Hayes. "We send a message to the community letting them know, look we're here and we know there are people who are working counterproductive to the progress of the municipality. We are here to do everything to try to stop them."

The new group will take over mid-February and Task Force Paxton will finally be heading home after almost a year.

"Our guys did a great job and I'm real proud of them," said Hayes. "Right now we are all looking forward to going home and seeing our families."

"We send a message to the community letting them know, look we're here..."

-Maj. Samuel Hayes-

The inside of the Serbian Church that Charlie Company, 2-112th Infantry, has guarded during their time here.



Team Sapper

Story and photos by Sgt. Jon Soucy

As snowflakes began to swirl around him, Spc. Edward Batykefer, an infantryman with Bravo Company, 1-111th Infantry, tried to sustain his record of being the only person in his squad not to slip and fall on ice while on patrol. Though the snow steadily fell and ice covered the ground, Batykefer and the other members of his squad negotiated their way down a narrow path near Vrbica/Verbice, continually searching the surrounding areas for concealed weapons, ammunition and explosives.

During their time in Kosovo, the Soldiers of Bravo Company, who along with Bravo Company, 337th Engineers, make up Team Sapper, have discovered several weapons caches containing numerous illegal weapons ranging from assault rifles and ammunition to mortar rounds and mines. And they attribute their ability to find weapons to a number of factors.

"We're very aggressive on our patrols," said Staff Sgt. James Herbst, a squad leader with the infantry company. "We get out in the towns and we really scour the area."

In addition to aggressively patrolling the areas in their sector, the Soldiers have also built good relationships with the people who live there.

"It's a lot of hard work by the squad leaders and platoons getting a good rapport with the [local] people" said Herbst, who added that because of the relationships that have been built, many people feel comfortable giving information to Soldiers from Multi-national Brigade (East) and Team Sapper.

Others in the unit agreed that the interaction between the unit and local residents

was one of their keys to success.

"The way we talk [with] the locals, I think we got a little close with them and they felt a little more safe and secure," said Spc. John Wendrychowicz, an infantryman with Team Sapper.

Using the relationships they have built to discover hidden weapons has made a difference in the area.

"I think we've made a difference," said Herbst. "Honestly, when we leave in February we can say we've made a difference in helping here in Kosovo [by collecting] as many weapons [and providing] a safe and secure environment. That's what we're here for."

The team's work in Kosovo has brought changes, but not only to the local population.

"It's even changed us," said Batykefer. "Now, there are a lot of things I'm not going to take for granted."

As the snow continued to fall and the wind continually blew, the Soldiers from Bravo Company headed back to their vehicles. Unlike many other patrols they have performed no weapons were found, but Batykefer's unblemished record remained.

Spc. John Wendrychowicz, left, and Spc. Edward Batykefer, both infantrymen with Bravo Company, 1-111th Infantry, search for weapons in an area near Vrbica/ Verbice. During their time in Kosovo the Soldiers have uncovered numerous weapons caches ranging from assault rifles and ammunition to mortar rounds and mines.



Staff Sgt. James Herbst, left, a squad leader with Bravo Company, issues instructions to his squad as they patrol in an area near Vrbica/ Verbice.



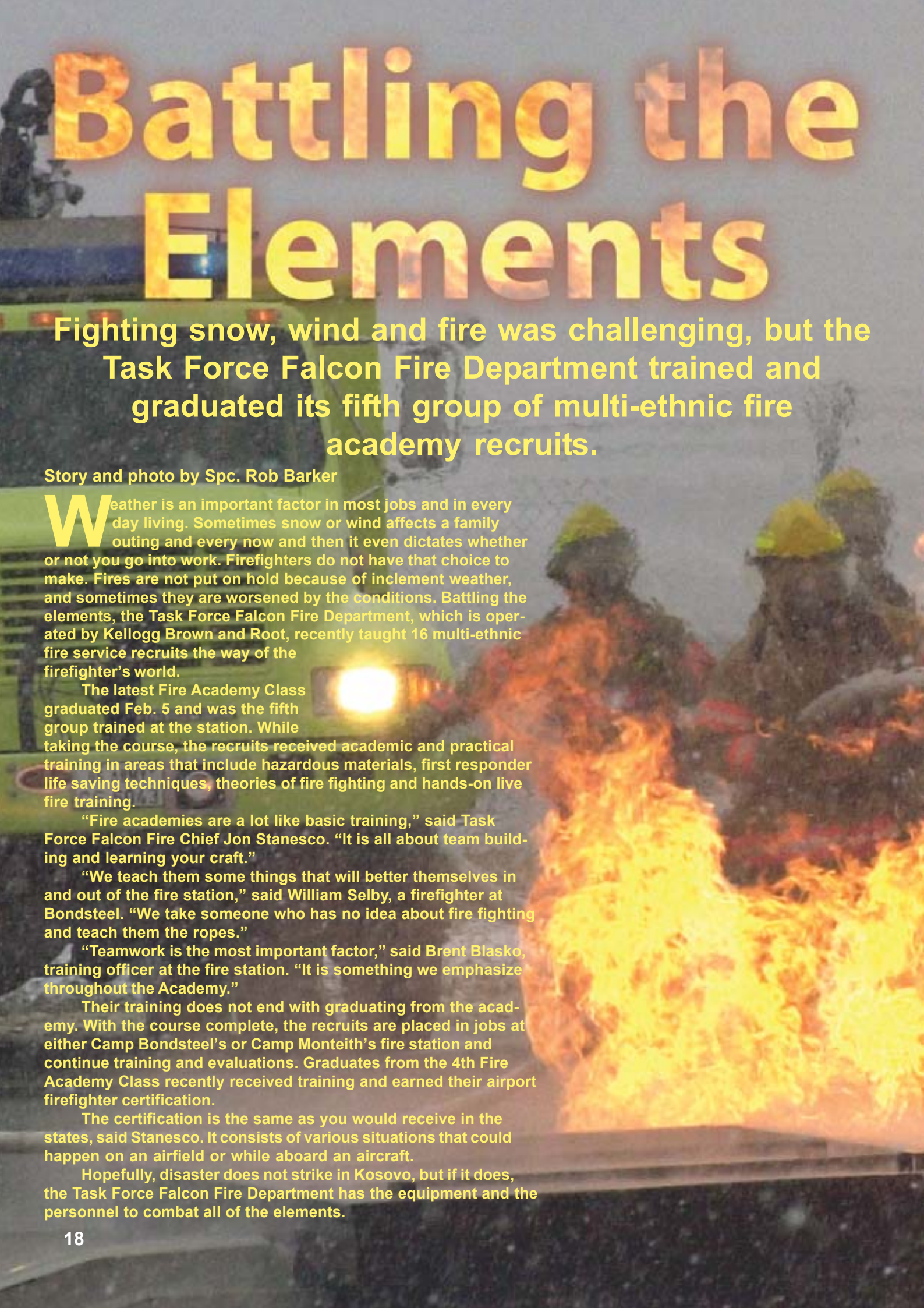
After searching an abandoned house near Vrbica/ Verbice for illegal weapons, Soldiers from Team Sapper take in the view from a second story porch before continuing their patrol.

Batykefer peers into an abandoned building near Vrbica/ Verbice as he patrols the area.



Batykefer shares candy, pencils and other treats with children in Dobrcana/ Dobrcane during a recent presence patrol.





Battling the Elements

Fighting snow, wind and fire was challenging, but the Task Force Falcon Fire Department trained and graduated its fifth group of multi-ethnic fire academy recruits.

Story and photo by Spc. Rob Barker

Weather is an important factor in most jobs and in every day living. Sometimes snow or wind affects a family outing and every now and then it even dictates whether or not you go into work. Firefighters do not have that choice to make. Fires are not put on hold because of inclement weather, and sometimes they are worsened by the conditions. Battling the elements, the Task Force Falcon Fire Department, which is operated by Kellogg Brown and Root, recently taught 16 multi-ethnic fire service recruits the way of the firefighter's world.

The latest Fire Academy Class graduated Feb. 5 and was the fifth group trained at the station. While taking the course, the recruits received academic and practical training in areas that include hazardous materials, first responder life saving techniques, theories of fire fighting and hands-on live fire training.

"Fire academies are a lot like basic training," said Task Force Falcon Fire Chief Jon Stanesco. "It is all about team building and learning your craft."

"We teach them some things that will better themselves in and out of the fire station," said William Selby, a firefighter at Bondsteel. "We take someone who has no idea about fire fighting and teach them the ropes."

"Teamwork is the most important factor," said Brent Blasko, training officer at the fire station. "It is something we emphasize throughout the Academy."

Their training does not end with graduating from the academy. With the course complete, the recruits are placed in jobs at either Camp Bondsteel's or Camp Monteith's fire station and continue training and evaluations. Graduates from the 4th Fire Academy Class recently received training and earned their airport firefighter certification.

The certification is the same as you would receive in the states, said Stanesco. It consists of various situations that could happen on an airfield or while aboard an aircraft.

Hopefully, disaster does not strike in Kosovo, but if it does, the Task Force Falcon Fire Department has the equipment and the personnel to combat all of the elements.



Finish strong

By Chaplain (Col.) Robert Boidock

It is hard to believe that we are almost at the end of our deployment. When you got on the bus or airplane at your home stations last March, having said your “good-byes” to your families one last time, did you ever think the end would come? Well, its here. Now our days are filled with doing our normal jobs and additionally, moving into transient quarters, redeployment briefings, REFRAD physicals, etc. Coming to an end of a task can be a good thing, but simply “running out the time clock” is not the same as finishing strong. The following story will illustrate this point. If you’re going to finish strong, you’ve got to keep running until you reach the finish line.

By 7 P.M. on October 20, 1968, at the Mexico City Olympics Stadium, it was beginning to darken. It had cooled down as well. The last of the Olympic marathon

runners were being assisted away to first-aid stations. Over an hour earlier, Mamo Waldi of Ethiopia had charged across the finish line, winning the 26-mile, 385-yard race looking as strong and as vigorous as when he’d started. As the last few thousand spectators began preparing to leave, they heard police sirens and whistles through the gate entering the stadium. The attention turned to that gate. A sole figure, wearing the colors of Tanzania, came limping into the stadium. His name was John Steven Aquari. He was the last man to finish the marathon in 1968. His leg was bandaged, bloody. He has taken a bad fall early in the race. Now, it was all he could do to limp his way around the track. The crowd stood and applauded as he completed that last lap. When he finally crossed the finish line, one man dared ask the question all were wondering. “You are badly injured. Why didn’t you quit? Why didn’t you give up?”

Aquari, with dignity said, “My country did not send me seven thousand miles to start this race. My country sent me to finish.”

So it is with your family and your country. They didn’t just send you to start this deployment. They didn’t just send you to begin a noble task or a take a trip to a foreign land. They sent you both to start and finish. The start of the race is a wonderful thing. Runners in the marathon are feeling strong and energetic. Like soldiers, they’ve done the right training for years. They are strong. They are ready. They’re like rabbits at the start of the race. The gun sounds. The crowd is cheering. They take off. There’s electricity in the air. When you start a race, you feel like a billion dollars. But when you get about sixteen miles into that marathon, it’s a whole different experience, isn’t it? You get blisters on your feet and feel like there’s a knife in your side. Your legs are turning to oatmeal. Your muscles are just screaming from the pain. Now this race is a completely different experience. Often in life, we get down the road and there’s pain involved. We say, “This hurts, so it must not be God’s will.” Do you see the fallacy here? Pain does not mean it’s no longer God’s will or your country’s, or your family’s. Sometimes the race we are called to run is filled with pain. But if you have been called to “soldier” in this deployment, run through the pain. Your country and your family did not send you to be a good starter. They called you to be a great finisher. Have you ever noticed that world-class runners have a “kick?” A kick is a technical runner’s term that means when they get to that last hundred yards or so, the runner can still sprint. No matter how much he’s run before, he can sprint what is left to the finish line and win that race. America and your family want you to have a kick. No matter what your circumstance, finish strong.



**Chaplain (Col.)
Robert Boidock**



Groundhog Day in Kosovo



Sgt. 1st Class Mark Benson, left, reads a Groundhog's Day proclamation as Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Wise holds Kosovo's version of Punxsutawney Phil after awakening Phil from his winter slumber at Camp Monteith to predict the weather for the coming weeks. The Soldiers of Bravo Company, 337th Engineer Battalion, which is headquartered in Punxsutawney, were instrumental in organizing the Groundhog Day event. Unfortunately for those serving in Kosovo, Phil predicted six more weeks of winter. Photo by Sgt. Jon Soucy.

Junior Soldiers get 'cool' options for promotion points

By Sgt. 1st Class Marcia Triggs

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Jan. 27, 2004) - Junior soldiers in a handful of job specialties have another option to gain promotion points.

As of Jan. 11, skill-based licenses and certifications from civilian sources are worth 10 points. There are 10 career fields that are currently participating in the initiative: Adjutant General, Air Defense Artillery, Aviation, Engineer, Ordnance, Quartermaster, Signal, Transportation, Army Medical Department and Public Affairs.

Promotable specialists and sergeants can add up to 50 points in technical certificates, but the points will only remain valid as long as the certificate is valid, said Sgt. Maj. Louisa Scott, the chief of Enlisted Promotions at U.S. Army Human Resources Command.

"The certificates can be added as a promotion action only when a soldier has at least 20 points to add. Then the expiration date on the certificate will be recorded. So if a soldier needs to recertify for his license to remain valid, and he fails to do so, then the points will be deleted," Scott said.

"This is a work in progress," said Jeffrey Colimon, the senior military analyst for the Training and Doctrine Command's Personnel Proponency Directorate.

The initiative is new and will undergo a number of changes, Colimon said, however soldiers can stay abreast of what military occupational specialties have jumped on board by visiting the Web site for Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line at www.cool.army.mil.

The different proponents have the latitude of analyzing the credentialing concept and determining if it adds value to their branch, Colimon said. Most Combat Arms proponents elected not to participate because of the lack of related certifications in the civilian arena, he added.

The promotion point incentive is the Army's way of encouraging soldiers who are not interested in college but still want to pursue professional development, according to officials in the Promotions Branch at the Human Resources Command.

"Far too many soldiers go out and purchase civilian education mainly for promotion points with no degree intent at all," said Sgt. 1st Class Cedric Thomas, the chief of Junior Enlisted Promotions at HRC. "The certification incentive will give them the opportunity to use training in a progressive nature."

If soldiers get hands-on training in their specific field, it can improve their job performance and make them more marketable in the civilian market, Scott said.

"By offering promotion points, the Army is encouraging soldiers to pursue professional development," Scott added. Officials in the Ordnance Corps introduced using credentialing opportunities as a promotional tool. Sgt. Maj. James Herrell, chief enlisted career manager in the Ordnance Corps' Personnel Proponency Office, said that developing a more competent Soldier was the driving force of the initiative.

"We want a competent, enlisted force and self development is key," Herrell said. "For a Soldier to earn industry credentials, he must study on his own time, get his own resources and demonstrate a level of competency that his peers have not."

Basic Training Brigade tests intensified schedule

By Spc. Brian Trapp

FORT BENNING, Ga. (Army News Service, Feb. 2, 2004) — The Basic Combat Training Brigade at Fort Benning is piloting two programs of instruction that provide more time in the field and focus more on warrior skills.

The "immersion" and "alternate" courses include the original POI from today's basic training, but add military operations in urban terrain and training with more weapons, without increasing the overall nine-week length of instruction.

The pilot class for the immersion POI started Jan. 29, and the class for the alternate POI picks up Feb. 12.

The new POIs will increase the time trainees spend in the field from three days to 10 days for the alternate POI pilot and to 23 days for the immersion POI pilot. Soldiers will also have classes on more heavy weapons and increase the time spent on the M-249 squad automatic weapon.

"These are weapons Soldiers weren't seeing before," said Capt. Robert Olszewski, commander, A Company, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, who is involved in the immersion POI pilot.

"(Soldiers) will be familiar with a lot more weapon systems than other classes, and they'll get blocks of instruction other classes haven't before," Olszewski said. "I think they'll be better prepared when they get to their units, because they'll have a wider knowledge base."

The current POI trains 19 of the 40 warrior skills and four of the nine warrior drills. The alternate POI trains 39 of the 40 skills and eight out of the nine drills. The immersion POI trains all the skills and drills.

"Instead of talking about guard duty in the class room and memorizing general orders, we're adding some more hands-on training," said 1st Sgt. James Conner of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment. Conner is involved in the alternate POI pilot.

"The quality of Soldiers stays the same," said Capt. Christopher Colster also of Bravo Company. "We graduate only the top-quality Soldiers; however, their Soldier skills will be a little bit more battle-focused now."

"The current POI was set up to run eight weeks," Colster said. "Now we're expanding the training, but still in the same amount of time, so it's a challenge."

SECTION Q N' A:

OLDIE What is one piece of advice you would give someone coming to Kosovo?

Spc. Candice Heishman

R "Get involved with MWR activities. Keep your family involved in your life. Remember, this too shall pass."



Photo by Spc. Tim Grooms

Spc. Candice Heishman, a finance clerk with the 628th Finance Detachment, shows a customer the amount of cash added to his Eagle Cash Card.

Spc. Eric Hamberger

"Treat everyone with respect and treat others how you want to be treated. You get more accomplished that way."

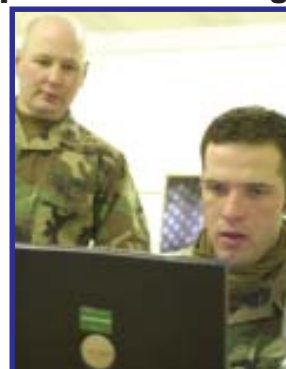


Photo by Spc. Sean McCollum

Spc. Eric Hamberger, right, a paralegal specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 56th Brigade, arranges a power of attorney for 1st Lt. Randy Agnew, the aviation communications officer for Task Force Aviation.

Spc. Thomas McElhattan



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soucy

"This is a great time to accumulate a bankroll. Don't spend it all."

Spc. Thomas McElhattan, an infantryman with Charlie Company, 1-112th Infantry, enters a mock doorway during training on Military Operations in Urban Terrain at range Falcon Three.

Spc. Charles Nagle



Photo by Spc. Luke Rollins

Spc. Charles Nagle, a military policeman with the 28th MP Company, dissects a fetal pig on Jan. 21 as part of an Anatomy and Physiology class offered through Camp Bondsteel's Laura Bush Education Center. The class dissected rats and fetal pigs as part of a study on mammalian anatomy.

"I'd have to say, stay in touch with your family and make good use of your spare time."



Scenes of Kosovo

Buildings near the village of Hashan are obscured by early morning fog. Photo by Sgt. Jon Soucy